

Rain has finally covered all of the Shortgrass Country. Until last week the moisture pattern was so scattered that one rancher reported he'd measured an inch in his pickup bed without getting his trailer tailgate wet. East of our ranch, a registered cow operator was maintaining a rain gauge on each of his front gate posts. However after three days of steady rainfall, he was deferring one gauge and considering putting the other on a standby basis.

This is one drouth breaker that isn't going to make me rain rich. At the calf sale last Monday, a friend suggested that we go get a hamburger. I told him I was going to stay off rich food until I could see farther down the alley.

A lady at the local bank had already said that my banker had left for a banking school in Dallas. An astrologer who couldn't decipher a scorpion's habits could tell that wasn't a good omen. Bankers having to go back to school are bound to mean that money is going to be short in the fall. I don't have any idea what jugkeepers need to learn at banking college. The assistant to the assistant temporary vice president can say no in six different languages. I never knew one who couldn't take an interest book and make Dr. Einstein think he'd lost count of his fingers and toes. Sending bankers back to school is as useless as telling an 18-year-old boy that he ought to stay home on Saturday night.

Sheep buying fever followed right behind the rains. Light lambs jumped four to six dollars a hundred weight in two weeks. Interest in stocker sheep was so dull before the rains that you'd have had to hire a cab driver to hear any sort of a stocker deal. On peak days buyers were treating the featherweight lambs and breeding ewes with the same gusto they would have shown toward a chance to contact a pair of fever blisters. Even stories of wool sales were more popular than sheep trades.

Accounts of the dreadful drouth in Australia were further lowering morale. In the last days of the dry spell, reporters were giving more space to Merino bucks selling for a dollar a head in Sydney than they were the sheep market in San Angelo. Every time the papers went to press, another bulletin proclaimed the end of the Australian herders was put alongside the obituary column. Bankers, in or out of school, were certain to have made a file on the disaster. And if it'd been dry here about two more weeks, the local sheep markets would have supplied a drama that would have made a kidnapper cry.

Rain isn't going to put me back on solid foods. Changing back and forth from meat loaf to milk toast is bad for your health. Shortgrass booms are too short-lived to let up and then have to go back to fasting.

Things don't look that good, anyway. I keep worrying about what my banker is going to learn up in the big city. It's a dead cinch he didn't go up there to get more education to deal with his customers in the sheep and cow business. He must be planning to enter a new field of financing. To be partially honest, that's all that's worrying me now.